

# **Teaching Learners with Reading and Writing Problems in the Classroom**

***An Interview Study with teachers in  
Norwegian schools***

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# Abstract.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the methods used to teach learners with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom. The main question of the study was: How are pupils with reading and writing problem taught in an ordinary classroom? From the main research problem were a number of sub questions, for example: how do teachers meet the needs of pupils with reading and writing problem? What kind of support do teachers give pupils with reading and writing problem in order to improve their academic achievements?

A qualitative approach was used to study how these learners are taught in an ordinary classroom. Semi-structured interview guide was used to get answers to the research questions. Two experienced teachers who have taught learners with reading and writing problems in ordinary classes were interviewed. The teachers had no training in special needs education. The findings showed that they used different methods such as Multi- sensory approach which utilizes all senses to relay information to assist these learners. The teachers in this particular school seem to have taken keen interest in the well-being of the learners the taught. They also engaged the learners in social activities irrespective of their disabilities. It was also found that there is partial inclusion as most of the learners with reading and writing difficulties are usually withdrawn out of the classroom to be given individualized attention. This indicates that learners with special educational needs do not fully benefit in inclusive classrooms.

It seems clear from the study that the efficiency of the management in the school is crucial for the whole school administration. In a learning institution, everyone has various roles and responsibilities and the head-teacher should ensure that a well-structured collaborative work is carried out by all staff for mutual benefits. So, all learners regardless of their differences should be able to access the opportunities. The role of the school thus is to value and treat its learners equally and to offer quality education to succeed. The educators should therefore see how best learners with reading and writing problems can benefit in an inclusive class without being separated from their peers.

# Dedication

I dedicate this work to my lovely sons; Sydney, Trevor and Rooney

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To my children, Sydney, Trevor and Rooney, I love you. Thank you for your endurance during my absence.

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>CSIE</b>	Center for Studies on Inclusive Education
<b>DFEE</b>	Department for Employment and Education
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>NSD</b>	Norwegian Social sciences Data Services
<b>SNE</b>	Special Needs Education
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Education Scientific Cultural Organization
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of Proximal Development

# Table of content

Abstract.....	III
Dedication.....	IV
Acknowledgement.....	V
List of Abbreviations.....	VI
Table of content.....	VII
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background for the study.....	1
1.2 Personal Experience.....	3
1.3 Research questions.....	3
1.4 Outline of the dissertation.....	5
2 Literature review and theoretical framework.....	7
2.1. Justification for the inclusive education.....	7
2.2. Inclusive education.....	7
2.2.1. Inclusive education in Norway.....	9
2.3. Learners with reading and writing problems.....	10
2.3.1 Teaching reading and writing.....	11
2.3.2. Reading and writing problem.....	13
2.3.3. Teachers awareness of pupils' reading and writing strength.....	13
2.3.4. Peer support in the learning process of reading and writing.....	16
2.3.4. Teachers' collaboration during the reading and writing lessons.....	18
2.3.5. Parent involvement in supporting their children in learning to read and write.....	19
2.4 Reading and writing materials.....	21
2.5 Teaching methods of reading and writing.....	22
2.6. Sociocultural Theory.....	24
3. Methodology.....	27
3.1 Research approach and design.....	27
3.2. Sampling and informants.....	28
3.3. Research instruments- interview.....	29
3.4. Procedure for using interview in the data collection.....	31
3.4.1. The process with pilot interview.....	31
3.4.1. The interview process.....	32

3.5. Ethical considerations.....	32
3.5.1. Informed Consent.....	33
3.6. Validity and Reliability .....	34
3.6.1. Validity.....	34
3.6.2. Reliability.....	34
3.6.3. Factors that might have threatened validity and reliability .....	35
3.6.4. Limitations of the study.....	36
4. Presentation and discussion of the findings.....	37
4.1. Meeting different needs of all pupils in the classroom.....	37
4.2 Sense of belongingness in the classroom .....	39
4.3 Support needed by teachers to teach pupils with reading and writing problems .....	41
4.4. Support teachers give pupils with reading and writing problem to improve their academic achievement	42
4.5 Cooperation of learners in classroom activities.....	44
4.6. Methods used in teaching learners with reading and writing problems .....	47
4.7. Materials used in teaching learners with reading and writing problems .....	50
5. Summary and Conclusion .....	52
5.1. How teachers meet the needs of pupils with reading and writing problems in the classroom for all. ....	52
5.2. Support that teachers give learners with reading and writing problem to improve their academic achievements.....	53
5.3. Limitation of the study .....	57
5.4. Recommendations .....	57
References .....	59
Appendices .....	63



# 1 Introduction

This study focuses on how learners with reading and writing difficulty are taught in an ordinary classroom. The chapter presents the background of the study, personal experience, research questions, justification of the study, purpose of the study, objectives of the study and significance of the study. It describes a qualitative study approach to the problem studied. My intention is to investigate the methods that teachers employ to offer support to this group of learners in an ordinary classroom alongside other learners. I was particularly interested in this area because of my experience in teaching these learners in an ordinary classroom and had a lot of difficulties in reaching all of them, and due to the large class size, they were often forgotten and neglected hence excluded. According to my experience in Kenya, there was an increasing need for teachers to be enlightened on the methods to employ in order to teach these learners in ordinary classrooms. This necessitated doing the study in this area to find out the methods that best suit this group of learners in an ordinary classroom. I do not intend to generalize the findings. It is my hope that the research findings can be replicated in other primary schools both in Norway and Kenya.

## 1.1 Background for the study

This study tracks some of the broad International and national perspectives on inclusive education policy related to teaching learners with special needs in an inclusive setting. Inclusion can be seen as a logical extension of integration. One notable international policy is the Salamanca Statement on inclusive education (1994) which encourages all governments to give priority to policy, legal and budgetary provision to improve their education system to take into account the wide diversity of learners' unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.

It also recommends that those with special needs education must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs. Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most accepted means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-

effectiveness of the whole education system. Inclusion starts from kindergarten which is the base of education (Salamanca Statement, 1994; Ainscow and Booth, 1990).

The international union started to develop official documents about human rights for education in the middle of 20th century. This move was later followed up with the action plan of education for all children. Inclusive education became the core issue in the process of provision of education for children with SNE. The right to education for every child is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948).

The convention on the rights of the child underlines the rights of children with SNE, health care services and preparation for employment to ensure maximum potential of the child's social integration and individual development (UN, 1989). The World Declaration on Education for All claims as well that all children, youth and adults should be provided with basic education. These steps should be taken within the education system to ensure equal access to education for every person with SNE (UN, 1990).

Inclusion is underlined as the process of addressing the variety of needs to all children (UNESCO, 2005). This approach indicates how to transform the education systems and settings in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It involves modification in the environment, especially in content, approaches, structure and strategies during provision of education.

It is evident that teaching is one of the strongest determinants of learner achievements. Teachers are one of the key players in education settings. They have the biggest task of providing high quality education to the diverse needs of learners in the classrooms (UNESCO, 2005).

Norway has adopted the policy in its system based on the above educational perspective. Inclusion, which refers to accommodation of all individuals in the society irrespective of their diverse needs by removing any barrier that may hinder learning from taking place effectively, forms a significant part of the Norwegian educational policy which calls for children and young people from all walks of life to come together in kindergartens and neighboring

schools and to receive special educational needs assistance where it is required (Johnsen, 2001).

The learning institutions in Norway are based on values and respect for human rights and equality which promotes a sense of belonging in the community. These values are deeply rooted in the society and laid down for the purpose of the institutions legislation which ensures that schools and kindergartens adapted education to learners with special needs. This is in line with the Salamanca Statement of 1994 ([www.european-agency.org,n.d](http://www.european-agency.org,n.d)).

## **1.2 Personal Experience**

According to Stakes and Hornby (2000), teaching pupils with special needs in an ordinary classroom is different from the regular program and teachers are often confronted with the question of how to instruct/teach these pupils. Having been an ordinary classroom teacher, the researcher encountered learners with reading and writing difficulties and since this difficulty impacts on all areas of the curriculum, these children often felt humiliated when asked to read and found themselves unable to access information and pass examination.

Many of them did not know their problem neither did the investigator know the teaching strategies to employ in order to help them learn to read. Reading and writing problem is one of the categories of special needs education. Every teacher has to give some extra time for teaching children with reading and writing problems. Because of this, the researcher wants to study how to teach learners with reading and writing problems in an ordinary classroom and describe the different approaches and make them available to others. Therefore to identify the various models of dealing with differences in classrooms forms the main task of the study. However, it should be noted that the existence of different models of dealing with differences in classrooms depends not only on teacher factors but also on the way in which schools organize their educational provision (Stakes, 1998).

## **1.3 Research questions**

There is a growing consensus in research that teaching methods are related to learners' academic achievement, especially in the case of learners with reading and writing problems. Therefore, there is need to study whether there are differences in the way these learners have

access to classroom activities focusing on how they take part on the activities, how engaged they are and what kind of support are offered to them. The main question to be addressed in the study is:

How are pupils with reading and writing problems taught in an ordinary classroom?

From the main focus question, a number of other sub-questions include:

1. How do teachers meet the needs of pupils with reading and writing problems in the classroom for all?
2. What kind of support do teachers give pupils with reading and writing problem to improve their academic achievements?

### **Justification of the study**

Some of the reasons which prompted this particular study are personal experiences of working in an educational system with children who had reading and writing problem and lack of teachers' awareness on detecting learners with this problem in order to offer the necessary support at an early stage.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate how pupils with reading and writing problem are taught in an ordinary classroom alongside their counterparts without any difficulty.

### **Objectives of the study**

In order to achieve the above purpose, the researcher sorted to do the following:

- Find out the teaching methods/strategies/instructions that teachers employ to offer support to the learners with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom.
- Discover the learning materials/resources used to assist these pupils how to read and write.

### **Significance of the study**

It was hoped that the information, conclusion and recommendations drawn from the research results would be of some importance to teachers, schools, future researchers, relevant stakeholders and indirectly to pupils with reading and writing problem.

The findings of the study may help many children with reading and writing problem since the results may be disseminated to different stakeholders. The same findings may also be used as a basis for relevant non-governmental organizations to help provide the support services to these children in schools.

This study can be among the many literature references to the future researchers and to show gaps which need further investigation. It may accord public education on how to teach learners with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom.

## **1.4 Outline of the dissertation**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one discusses the background of the study, personal experiences, research questions, justification of the study, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study and the study outline. Chapter two discusses literature review, it discusses justification of inclusion of all pupils with special needs, inclusion and inclusive education, inclusion in Norway, learners with reading and writing problems, reading problems, writing problems, teachers awareness of pupils' strength related to reading and writing, parent involvement, research results related to reading and writing problems, research results related to methods of teaching reading and writing, co-operative learning, team teaching, materials used in teaching learners with reading and writing problems, and the theoretical framework. Chapter three discusses the methodology used. It comprises of the research design, method and instruments of data collection, area of study, the procedure of sampling of the cases, data collection procedure, data analysis, validity and reliability and ethical consideration. Chapter four is the presentation and analysis of the data. The presentation and analysis is done in relation the pre conceived themes in the research questions, they include; creating a good classroom for all learners, meeting the needs of learners with reading and writing problems, support teachers give learners with reading and writing problems to improve their academic achievements. Chapter five comprises of the

discussion of the research findings, conclusion and the implication of the study, list of references and appendices.

## **2 Literature review and theoretical framework**

This chapter presents the discussion of the main concepts as well as an overview of previous studies in relation to the teaching methods that should be employed to meet the individual needs of pupils with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom. The inclusion of pupils with and without learning difficulties is also presented as suggested by international and national policies.

### **2.1. Justification for the inclusive education**

As discussed earlier, some research reports show that there are still some unfavorable opinions about the inclusion of pupils with special needs. These discrepancies exist despite the fact that many International and national policies as well as research findings have endorsed the need for education for all in mainstream instead of special schools. Article 24 of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, (2006) state that 'all children with disabilities have the right to education in the inclusive settings' and also set the objective for full inclusion in the mainstream education system.

Inclusion of pupils with special educational needs means that mainstream schools have the responsibility of making adjustments to accommodate the needs of all learners. According to the Salamanca Statement, (1994), inclusive schools should acknowledge and respond to pupils' diverse needs by accommodating their speed and styles of learning and also ensuring quality education to all children by having appropriate teaching strategies, curriculum, learning environment, good resource/material use and collaboration with communities. Inclusion is therefore a complicated process that involves not just placement of these pupils in the mainstream schools but also making learning to be real.

### **2.2. Inclusive education**

This is a goal that all participants in any society should aim at achieving to ensure that all people regardless of their racial, economic, physical or any difference are not excluded from

any of the society's activities. This calls for equal opportunities and accessibility to all resources, services and responsibilities. The full and equal participation of each individual is assured in an inclusive society in which differences is respected and valued. Discrimination and bias against those who are different is eliminated through appropriate practices and policies like the national and international. As participation of those who are "different" takes root, all learners and teachers gain the virtues of being accommodating, accepting, patient and co-operative. Thus all learners benefit from learning and working in an inclusive educational system. Other children gain some valuable virtues such as being considerate, patient and humble as they support their peers with special needs. Some learners with special needs education are gifted with special abilities which their peers can also benefit from (Massey, 2008 and Reid, 1994).

Inclusion is seen as a process of responding and addressing of learners' diversity of needs by increasing participation in learning, community activities and in cultures that reduces inclusion from within to broad education. It emphasizes on giving equal participation of people with disability into general education but with openness to personal choice and special help and facilities for people who may need them (UNESCO, EFA, 2003).

Inclusive education may be viewed as a process of removing barriers to learning and participation of all children and young people in the mainstream schools. According to The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, (CSIE, 2002), inclusive education encompasses the learning of all children and young people in ordinary institutions with appropriate network of support that enables them to participate fully in life and mainstream settings regardless of their needs. On the other hand, Beirne, (1994) describes inclusion as the full time placement of students with and without disabilities in the regular education system where their needs should be met.

Whereas some people think that full inclusion may not be possible and that inclusive education should not be addressed to students with special needs only, Ainscow and Booth, (1998) propose that inclusive education should be looked at as a process where schools, governments and communities try to reduce barriers to full participation in learning for all citizens. This broader view of inclusion stresses equal opportunity for all students including



those with special needs, health problems, minority ethnic groups, the gifted and talented and others.

### **2.2.1. Inclusive education in Norway**

The definition and perception of disability determines the educational organization for learners with reading and writing difficulty. According to the Nordic research on disability, three fundamental contexts of disability such as relational, medical and social models are somehow intertwined. Each one defines peoples' understanding of special needs in learning and how the education can be adapted to meet these children's needs. The social model perceives disability as coerced by a society obsessed with barriers while the medical model looks at disability as causally linked to an individual's limitation/deficit. The two parallel definitions determine various approaches of acknowledging the learning problems and solutions for inclusive schools (Gustavsson et al, 2005).

The social model claims that learning problems result from un-adapted educational systems which do not meet learners' diverse needs in the classrooms. Those who follow this model believe that the barriers can be removed to make learners with disabilities access the same education as their counterparts. Medical model on the other hand considers an individual approach of helping learners with special needs. The schools which have adopted this model practice withdrawal of these learners from the regular classroom for an additional support and one-to-one attention in a segregated class (Norwich, 2002). However, the difference between the two models is imprecise. He further affirms that the two models co-exist.

The same author maintains that the relational model incorporates the two by considering individual limitations and the removal of barriers to accommodate the learners in an ordinary/inclusive classroom. The model depicts those in special education as children with difficulties emphasizing on individual and society to help achieve a school for all.

In order to achieve education in fully inclusive primary school for all in Norway, the relational model is applied. It forms important objectives in the establishment of educational system which addresses all children in Norway and this enhances inclusion in schools. With this model in place, one expects schools in this country to accommodate all learners with special needs. However, the goal for inclusive schools in Norway has not been achieved

because the teaching and learning that takes place in the schools do not depict inclusion as it should be. The assumption that inclusive schools exist seems to be the major barrier to its inception (Haug, 1999).

The issue of regular schools accommodating learners with special needs is a world- wide debate that is currently important in schools. Many countries aim at adopting one approach where practices and policies are geared towards an educational system that accommodates all children. International declarations like The Jomtien Declaration on Education for All, (1990) and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (1948) encourage countries to provide each child with reasonable learning irrespective of his/her learning needs, interests, abilities and characteristics in an inclusive environment (UNESCO, 1994 & Article 24 of UN, 2007).

In Norway, the act on special schools was merged into regular education act in 1975 and this led to the closure of special schools by 1992 though public special schools for learners who are hard of hearing still exist. Nonetheless, some of the special schools were transferred to the regular schools and are called 'special units'. Here some learners with difficulties are educated even though the main perspective in Norway is that all children should get equal education and access to learning in the same school with no segregation whatsoever. Despite this fact, some children still go to special schools (Haug, 1999 & Wendelborg and Ytterhus, 2009).

Although it appears that there are many advantages of inclusion, it is clear that there are many challenges facing it. It is not merely about providing access into mainstream school for all learners. It is not about closing down the special schools and dumping those learners in an unchanged mainstream system, but changing the existing schools in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations, styles and leadership roles. This is an indication that inclusion cannot be done on the cheap. Its initiatives need a proper activity-led funding formula (Ainscow et al, 1995).

## **2.3. Learners with reading and writing problems**

This study discusses the teaching methods employed to teach learners with reading and writing problems in the classroom. Reading and writing problem is one of the categories of learning disabilities that falls under special needs education. It is a combination of abilities and difficulties which affect the learning process and is evident when accurate and fluent

word reading and/ or writing develops with great difficulty. It is generally accepted that as their primary school careers unfolds, learners gradually move from the stage of 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'. However, for a significant number of learners, this is not the case and as they progress through their primary years, they still do not read fluently. Since the reading difficulty impacts on all areas of the curriculum, these learners feel humiliated when asked to read and find themselves unable to access information and pass examination hence this lowers their self-esteem. Some teachers of learners with reading and writing problem do not know which methods to employ to help them come out of the problem neither do the pupils know that they have a problem (Reid, 2003).

Success depends on the educational program which is suited to meet the pupils' strengths, needs and learning characteristics. This helps with information on assistive technology, instruction, assessment, transitional- planning and self- advocacy for pupils with reading and writing problem (Beers, 2003, p. 22).

### **2.3.1 Teaching reading and writing**

According to Reid, (2003) People with reading and writing problems have a great deal to offer society through their creativity, skills and talents which always lie dormant and untapped due to frustration of not being able to read fluently and write like the rest. A - friendly environment and appropriate help should open ways for those who may have experienced failure in their school life. The researcher tends to agree with the above author when he affirms that there needs to be a change of attitude within the learning environment that is shared by all members of staff as well as school peers to accommodate children with reading and writing problems in an ordinary classroom. This is because people with negative attitude always look down upon these learners and this lowers their self-esteem.

Considering the above, all children entering primary school should be screened or assessed for reading and writing difficulties so that an early intervention can be put in place. This is to the benefit of the individual and can be cost-effective. If after assessment a child is given a positive explanation of his/her reading and writing difficulty, he/she will come to terms with the problem and know that something can be done to help him/her and this creates a big relief as he then knows that there is a reason for his/her academic failure. It is always a turning point when lack of confidence and despair is replaced by determination to succeed in life

(Pollock and Waller, 1994). This kind of assurance has enabled some children with this kind of problem to study and attain higher levels of education.

It is clear that many children may not have an assessment but can get an explanation about their problem from a good teacher. Unfortunately, a good number of these children slip through unnoticed and therefore receive no help even though frequent remarks, for instance, 'could do better' or 'essay writing poor' on their school reports should warrant further investigation by a concerned teacher although with a bigger class size, this may be difficult (Pollock and Waller, 1994).

Nonetheless, the earlier the problem is detected the better the chances of intervention. The younger the child the more effective the remedial intervention and a good nursery school education should help a child with certain underlying problems/difficulties in reading. Much work is required to help improve the spoken language skills and make the child aware of it because of its significance to the child's later acquisition of literacy but this does not happen as teachers tend to follow the national curriculum. There are many studies which show that the greater a child's awareness of the stipulated phonological structure of words before reading instruction, the greater the child's success in learning how to read (Bradley, 1989; Gardner, 1994; Snowling, 1987 & Bradley, 1994).

Based on the argument by the above researchers, it can be of great help if special teaching starts not later than age seven. However, this does not happen in many schools. If the problem is diagnosed early, less time will be needed to make the child catch up, though in many cases they can be helped before frustration sets in (Miles and Miles, 1984 and Badian, 1988). It is worth remembering that not all these children display the same characteristics, each is individual and different, although they may have some common reading and writing difficulties, and this needs to be acknowledged in both the assessment and the teaching. It is important, therefore, for the class teacher to have some knowledge of the characteristics of reading and writing problem in a learner and typical examples of the difficulties displayed by these children. This has often missed and that is why these children are always detected very late and therefore teachers have to struggle to teach them how to read.

### **2.3.2. Reading and writing problem**

A pupil with a reading problem shows difficulties in reading skills which are unexpected according to age, cognitive ability, intervention and quality and quantity of instruction. The problem is not as a result of developmental delay or sensory impairment.

It may be described by difficulties in single word reading, sounding out words/letters, reading sight words, comprehension, inadequate phonological processing, for instance, they cannot understand that sentences consist of words, words are comprised of syllables which are also made up of single sounds or phonemes.

The processing problem can also be seen in spelling and writing which are usually common with reading problem. For pupils with this problem, the difficulty will exist despite being combated. However, these pupils' reading ability may improve though it continues to be characterized by a slower reading rate (Lundberg & Høien; Mather & Goldstein, 2001 & Isaacs, 2012).

Pupils with writing problem have difficulties in writing to communicate their ideas. They may present difficulties in making sentences, using punctuation in sentences and using grammatically accepted vocabulary and paragraph organization. It may be difficult for someone to read their handwriting as some of them write letters upside down or mirror writing. Most of them have many spelling mistakes in their writing. With these problems, they are always faced with poor academic achievement (Payne and Turner, 1999 & Strickland et al, 2002).

### **2.3.3. Teachers awareness of pupils' reading and writing strength**

Teachers should know that pupils learn in different ways hence have different strengths and needs. For instance, a pupil who is not good at reading may be talented in other areas like drama, mathematics or even physical education. Every pupil with a learning difficulty has his/her own learning style, interests, needs and strengths. Nonetheless, teachers and parents should be able to help the pupil to identify their strengths and interests (Shaywitz, 2003 & Anita et al, 2008).

It is significant for these pupils to identify their areas of interests which they can excel in. this may make them feel they have something important to say and an area they can succeed in and see themselves as ‘winners’.

It is also helpful for teachers to make the pupils aware of their learning difficulty and ability so that the pupil can have a positive self-image which help in building a successful and competent person. Teachers should give the parents and pupils examples of successful people who had reading and writing problem in school (Shaywiz, 2003).

It is critical to remember that the degree/level in which pupils experience problems vary from one pupil to another. Their areas of strengths and interests may be different too. It is therefore important for teachers to offer support to each pupil depending on his/her strengths, interests and needs (Shaywiz, 2003 & Kirk et al, 2006).

### **Teachers’ skills of detecting differences in speech sounds in reading and writing**

The ability to understand verbal information is very significant if a child is to develop literacy skills. Children always listen and speak/talk then learn to read and write. This is an indication that the reading and writing skills depend on an individual’s language development (Ashcraft, 2006; Hunt and Ellis, 1999; Sternberg, 1999 in Anita et al, 2008).

If children have problems of channeling what they hear, this affects their literacy development. For instance, if an individual has difficulty in comprehending words in a sentence, this interferes with his/her response. The language is like an endless road, for example, it might not be easy to tell the difference between ‘light and ‘fight’. This is the same as somebody with auditory processing problem where the person can hear but may not tell the difference between similar but different words which he/she is exposed to every day (Masoura and Gathercole, 1999 in Anita et al, 2008 & O’Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

In speech sound recognition, there are areas of difficulties, for example, perception of words where a child is to listen and interpret information. This kind of processing has some difficulties associated with it which consist: perception which is associated with correct articulation of words, sound speech awareness skills like omission of letters or sounds,

blending, rhyming and division of sounds or letters and identifying and recognizing sounds in words (Ashcraft, 2006; Gray, 2002 in Anita et al, 2008).

Discrimination which is the ability to recognize the difference between speech sounds. The difficulties here are, getting the differences in similar but not same words such as 'hut' and 'hat', 'see' and 'sea' and discriminating letters that sound the same like 'd' and 't' and 'v' and 'f' (Strickland et al, 2002; Anita et al, 2008).

Memory refers to remembering information. Information is acquired through the senses and when comprehended and attended to, it can be kept for a while in the short –term memory, but if it is well organized, then it can be transferred to the long-term memory. Short term memory consists of idea or thought that do not last longer. When the working memory is activated through strategies like elaboration, rehearsal, chunking and period, the keeping of this information may be prolonged. The capability of the working memory may also be developed if some mental processes are programmed. If learners depend only on their working memory to read, they may not be able to understand the text well. For fluent reading and understanding, it is needful that the interpretation becomes natural. Well organized, relevant and interesting information may be stored in the long-term memory permanently (Alberta Education, 1996).

The procedures utilized to relate and organize new information on to the previous understanding and to keep it in a good way, have implications for how easily the pupil will be in a position to retrieve the information in future. Teachers have always said that learners with reading and writing problem may know information at one time but fail to recall it the next time. The problem may not be with the memory but how the information was processed. Working memory enables people to exploit their memory systems extensively. It allows people to remember information through rehearsals in the minds, to relate this information to the previous knowledge and to plan the future operation (Alberta Education, 1996).

The child may not associate letters and sounds like 'spot' and 'pots'. Knowing that ordering is part of speech sound awareness is very important even if the words use the same sound segments. They should know that a language has some sounds that can be recycled and

rearranged and be used in many words (Strickland et al, 2002; Feifer and De Fina et al, 2000 in Pressley, 2002).

### **Significance of speech sound awareness to teachers**

There are several ways of becoming linguistically aware, but the capability of one to focus on speech sound of his/her language may help in developing reading ability. This awareness may be perceived as an expression of language. This shows that phonological processing is the application of information on the structure of sound in interpreting the written words. For this processing to happen, the child should comprehend how to use it and have some knowledge on many sound structures of his/her language of instruction (Strickland et al, 2002 & O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

Children who do not have this awareness are likely to have reading and writing problem. According to many researchers (Bradley and Bryant, 1983; Kamhi and Catts, 1991; Juel et al, 1986), reading can be achieved in early grades of primary school by measuring phonological awareness. Therefore, without this awareness the relationship between sounds and letters may be difficult to understand. Lack of it can also be recognized when the child has problem in breaking the reading code, it affects his/her word recognition and spelling strategies. To curb this problem, speech sound and the skill be introduced in early years of learning in order to enhance the skill of reading and writing (Kamhi and Catts, 1991 in Pressley, 2002).

The kind of problems faced by young readers who are beginning to read may be detected from the written text they read. In alphabetic languages, the main difficulty faced by this group of readers is how to link letters and sounds. For this link to be realized, they should be taught that speech can be divided into sub-lexical parts like sounds which represent the alphabets. Children who are using the second language to read encounter this problem (Strickland et al, 2002).

### **2.3.4. Peer support in the learning process of reading and writing**

The way pupils relate to one another in class can be a motivation to learning especially during class activity. When the activity is complex and requires problem solving skills, the weaker



pupils get support from the able peers and this promotes cooperation amongst them. This interaction is likely to encourage the learning process and makes pupils feel that they belong to one family and it motivates them to work with each other (Strickland et al, 2002; Webb and Palinscar, 1996 in Anita et al, 2008 & Isaacs, 2012).

According to researchers (O'Donnell, 2002; O'Donnell and O'Kelly, 1994 in Anita et al, 2008), peer tutoring should be encouraged by teachers because it enhances personal interdependence, individual accountability and cooperative skills. It also enables pupils to respect each other's ideas/opinions and practice turn taking in the group.

In the process of solving problems, they ask questions and seek explanations from each other, learn to organize their knowledge or answers by exchanging ideas. This interaction among peers can also cause cognitive conflict which encourages them to question their understanding critically and try out new ways of solving the problem (O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

Some children also enjoy as they learn from their friends due to freedom of expression as they interact. In the process of this interaction, peers build social relationships among themselves and emotional well-being. This makes them learn to show empathy and get concerned with one another as they share knowledge (Anita et al, 2008).

As much as peer support is encouraged by many scholars because it promotes learning, it has some disadvantages, for example, some pupils may fail to participate because the able peers will do the task on their behalf, they may use the opportunity to socialize instead of learning, they may fail to tackle the question because they are rushing to finish ahead of others, instead of challenging misconceptions, they may support the misunderstanding and finally, they may consider their able peers as experts than teachers whether they are wrong (Anita et al, 2008).

### **Social skills in supporting learners with reading and writing problem**

Pupils with a learning disability do struggle with academic achievement and have a feeling that they are failures in life. This has a negative effect on their self-esteem hence inflicts difficulties in their social skills. This is contrary to their able peers who appear to be socially competent and have well developed receptive and expressive language skills, high self-esteem and a sense of control of their lives. It is imperative that teachers pay attention to pupils'

social skill development, peer group discussions or corporative learning and encouraging learners to use their strengths and not weaknesses to learn. This can be done by employing teaching and learning strategies that incorporate all these (Alberta Education, 1996).

Learners with reading and writing problem may have difficulties with receptive and expressive language skills, visual-motor, auditory and visual processing. They may also have shortfalls in the areas of memory, study and organizational skills, attention span and social skills. Teachers should therefore be aware of the fact that pupils with reading and writing problem may have their own unique learning profile and that the degree of their difficulties also differ. It is important to resolve and offer support to every pupil depending on his/her strengths and needs (Alberta Education, 1996).

#### **2.3.4. Teachers' collaboration during the reading and writing lessons**

This is sometimes referred to as team teaching which is done by inviting other teachers, teacher assistants or special educators to give pupils an additional support apart from the one offered by the classroom or subject teacher when the lesson is in progress. The extra classroom teacher is in a position to assist and supplement the teaching strategy of the regular classroom/subject teacher in relation to the curriculum and teaching methods (O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

Collaboration among teachers during the lesson is an effective teaching and learning strategy which encourages discussion and sharing of ideas. It reflects togetherness and a good working relationship. It is vital for individual development as they compare their problem solving strategies and identify their areas of expertise.

The team work enables teachers to feel the support by other teachers to meet the individual needs of pupils in the classroom. It enables teachers to acknowledge their weaknesses without any feeling of embarrassment and accept corrections from their colleagues positively in order to assist the learners. This is because teachers have strengths and weaknesses too (Anita et al, 2008 & O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

Elements of this team work include: openness, communication or free interaction and honesty since it enables every teacher to evaluate his/her teaching strategies as discussed by the team members. This kind of collaboration allows teachers to share their successful strategies and difficulties/challenges.

By collaborating, teachers exchange ideas about appropriate teaching approaches with one another and this widens their knowledge on how to reach all learners in the classroom. The teacher will have an additional resource to help give support to learners. A teacher who practices sharing, partnership and peer support learning will try to introduce this kind of learning in the classroom by encouraging pupils to help one another and accept correction positively. They will also learn that every person/teacher has some knowledge that can be borrowed by other members of the team (Strickland et al, 2002 and Anita et al, 2008).

#### **Benefits of collaboration among teachers**

Teachers may be able to combine forces and resources in order to plan the lessons and compose various activities for particular skills. They can advise one another on how to respond to every-day tasks of assisting learners with reading and writing problem.

By collaborating, they can identify their weak areas that need solutions in order to meet the learners' diverse needs in the classroom. This can help them create awareness on many ways of attaining different methods and goals of teaching in an ordinary classroom. Collaboration can also help them to identify effective classroom management strategies that can promote inclusion of all pupils as stated in most of the international and national policies.

#### **2.3.5. Parent involvement in supporting their children in learning to read and write**

All parents may react differently when they are told that their child has a problem/difficulty. It may be quite challenging for the parents to have a child with reading and writing problem and they may take time to accept the problem hence their reaction may be unique. Information and facilitation by teachers to parents on the problem may be of great help for the parents. The home-school communication should continue to be encouraged in order for both parties to gain understanding of the educational needs and strengths of the pupils. The parents' role is very critical as they have their child at home most of the time and should therefore play a key

role so that they can have a meaningful role as one of the team member (Saskatchewan Education, 2004; Kirk et al, 2006 & Issacs, 2012).

Various intervention programs for learners with disabilities are formulated and monitored by a multidisciplinary team which may consist of special educators, peers, the learner's teacher, therapists and parents. Parents have three main responsibilities as collaborators in the learner's educational program. First, since they stay with the child at home and observe him/her, they are able to give information regarding him/her to the professionals which is vital for the development of the program (Kirk et al, 2008). They play a significant role in the teaching process especially at home after undergoing some training by team members like teachers on how to teach certain skills, for example, the daily living activities and academic skills. Lastly, they are in a position to back-up the learning of their children by applying the skills taught in school at home to create continuity between school work and home work. All these empower them to be active participants in the decision making process in the care of their children (Kirk et al, 2008).

According to Guppy and Hughes, (1998), the benefits of parent-child bond and opportunities for individual teaching approach should be related to the school's provision to enhance a positive working relationship/atmosphere. When this collaboration is successful, the child feels a sense of security knowing that aims and values of his/her education are shared between school and home. They further argue that the parents also feel valued since the school approves their input in the child's learning. However, there are challenges that threaten the school-home team work, for instance, the distance between school and home. The teachers may not know what takes place at home and vice versa. Another challenge is that a few parents/relatives may be willing to help the child at home due to lack of time especially the working parents. They may seek helpers' assistance who may apply their own methods of teaching the child. This interferes with the continuity of school-home work that should exist as stressed by the teachers (O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

The school should get a solution to these challenges by calling parents' meetings where the child's progress is discussed with individual parents and advice given on the choice of books to be bought, the time schedules for reading at home and how to support the child during reading and writing. The school should also ensure that parents and teachers speak the same

language by exchanging the child's reading and writing records and guideline on how to offer support to be provided by the teacher (Kirk et al, 2008).

## **2.4 Reading and writing materials**

Children can learn using a variety of sources like books, computers, pictures, cards and people such as teachers, peers and parents. To be able to meet individual needs of pupils in class, the teacher should know which way works best for each child by ensuring flexibility and child's choice in order to match the materials according to their diverse needs (Isaacs, 2012).

It is difficult to teach in a classroom without using relevant materials to the lesson or topic. The resources should be up to date to enhance sensory curriculum and easy to be manipulated by all children in the classroom. Resources ranging from time, space, human and material may be considered in the classroom (LeRoy and Simpson, 1996; Stickland et al, 2002 & Isaacs, 2012).

There are human resources which without their back-up, the sensory curriculum may not be realized. Children with severe special needs may need intensive human support whose effective use should be deemed indispensable. The following are some of the human resources and how they can be utilized:

Head-teacher – as heads of the school, they should help teachers in planning the materials, observe them as they teach in class hence will appreciate the need for teaching materials in classrooms.

Family- when the parents are involved effectively in the learning process of their children, they feel valued and want to do more for the child at home. This helps in the curriculum development and also enhances good cooperation between school and home. Teachers should therefore organize reading workshops to facilitate to the parents how they can help the child to read at home using relevant materials. This provides one-to-one attention which promotes a healthy parent-child relationship (Strickland et al, 2002; Anita et al, 2008 & Isaacs, 2012).

Volunteers- these are people who freely offer their support to the pupils inside and outside the classroom. They should be given special part in the delivery of sensory curriculum but with

close monitoring. They may have no expertise in planning the materials but can offer their services to individual pupils in class (Strickland et al, 2002).

Teacher assist/support staff- they always assist subject/class teachers to give a one-to-one support to pupils with difficulties in a particular subject. Their services are always of great help.

Peers- when teachers give complex or unusual topics in class this may be a good opportunity for collaboration among pupils. For some pupils, peer tutoring motivates them to read and write since they are guided by their age mates or play mates whom they are free with. Teachers should encourage peer tutoring to enhance learning in the classroom (Anita et al, 2008; Strickland et al, 2002 & Isaacs, 2012).

Apart from the above, there are also material resources that teachers can use to support reading and writing in class. Teachers of reading and writing usually make successful materials that match the child's level of understanding and his/her difficulty. If it is good enough then it should motivate the pupil to practice reading and writing, so this should be considered when choosing materials for the topic (Strickland et al, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, the use of computer technology as a teaching material helps pupils in reading and writing and they enjoy working with it because it gives them immediate feedback. It also maintains their interest in the activity. Other resources also motivate reading and should not only be books or printed text (Strickland et al, 2002).

## **2.5 Teaching methods of reading and writing**

Research has shown that when dealing with children presenting reading and writing problems, the most common approaches are the sensory-motor one and the auditory one. Collard, 2000 and Ott, 1997) affirm that the first approach increases the ability for the child to read while Duff and Clarke, (2011) point out that the second is better when the child presents hyperactivity.

Research by (Miles, 2006; Speece et al, 1996; Vaughn, 1994 and Hallahan & Keogh, 2001) shows that under certain circumstances, an inclusive environment promotes the best learning

outcomes for all. They further affirm that inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards learners with special needs and the resources available to them. In a number of studies, the attitude of teachers towards educating learners with special needs has been put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more conducive for all learners.

If mainstream teachers do not accept the education of students with learning difficulties as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that special teacher takes responsibility and will organize a secret segregation in the school (for instance, the special class). The way in which teachers act in the classroom, depends upon the resources available to them. Research (Brown and Saks, 1980 & Gerber and Semmel, 1985), shows that the different types of resources available to teachers can be concluded from the micro-economics of teaching.

Research by Swanson (1999) shows that the following suggestions can be practiced when teaching pupils with reading and writing problem, this include; use many strategies by cueing pupils, Practice interactive questioning and answering, teach problem solving, Explain information from simple to complex tasks by breaking it into manageable parts then combine and practice this for easy acquisition and retention of information, Use small group instruction, Match intervention strategies with pupils' learning styles and strengths, Expose pupils to many types of writing materials to make an environment which is language-rich, Give clear and precise directions, Create regular opportunities to read and write, Establish a good rapport with parents by communicating with them quite often and use a multi-sensory instruction approach.

Engage pupils actively in the learning process. Bloom, (1987) affirms that if some of these considerations are applied in classroom when teaching pupils with reading and writing problem, then learners may retain about 90 Percent of what they say and do.

Bloom, (1987) further asserts that pupils with reading and writing problem face many challenges in a school setting every-day and that adapted education can reduce these challenges. He argues that these pupils do not necessarily require a modified or different program but they need adaptations to the regular curriculum that meets their needs, interests and strengths.

According to Saskatchewan Education, (1992), teachers need to adjust instruction, curriculum topics, environment and materials in order to accommodate pupils' diversity and help all pupils succeed in curriculum objectives. The adaptations should be given so that pupils with reading and writing problem can have the same opportunity as their peers without the problem in order to attain the learning objectives of the regular curriculum. This should not be seen as giving these pupils an advantage over the others or special treatment. It is very important for classroom teachers to keep a record of all the adaptations for easy handing over to the next class teacher when the year begins (Kirk et al, 2006; Anita et al, 2008 & Isaacs, 2012).

## **2.6. Sociocultural Theory**

This study is based on the Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of proximal Development (ZPD). The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the distance between what a child can do on his/her own and what he/she can do with the assistance of a teacher, an adult or a more capable peer. Vygotsky believed that without assistance, this group of children cannot perform a particular task, but during the learning process, children first learn by imitating teachers. Focusing more on education, ZPD can be very useful to teachers since it reminds them of how learners can be aided to attain goals with adult (teacher) direction and support within the classroom hence is conducive for the teaching of reading to the learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky gives one of the best directions on assisting learners in academic performances with regard to teaching reading (ZPD) where the teacher strives to enhance a learner's grasp of concept (Vygotsky, 1978) . He further asserts that good instruction is aimed at the learner's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986 as quoted in Dixon- Krauss (1996, p.14). This is important in improving their functional abilities in reading hence enhancement of learning through adaptations.

### **Collaboration with competent people**

Learners with reading and writing problems need support in task performance and in a stimulating environment in order to enhance these skills. How the children learn through mediation, where an adult or peer gives assistance in the learning process and guided participation by practice, imitation and correction are very essential. Mediation can be applied to learners with this problem in the learning process when the teacher gives individualized



assistance in reading and writing exercises. The teacher can also use the more capable peers to assist these learners in the process which encourages collaborative learning so that development of this learner goes to the next zone (Klein, 2001 and Rogoff 2003).

In the analysis of the phenomenon, Rogoff (2003) suggest a responsive way to assist learners that the pace and direction of their efforts up to them as being seen to help. It involves helping according to the learner's need more than organizing instruction as per the adult's. This calls for flexibility in the instructional methods used in the classroom. Restructuring the teaching methods, activities, arranging the classroom set up and learning materials which suit the unique needs of learners with reading and writing problem is a way of assisting these children.

### **Scaffolding**

The concept of ZPD is widely used to study children's mental development in relation to education. It is therefore seen as a scaffolding of support points for doing an action. Scaffolding is a process by which a teacher or competent peer helps the learner with reading and writing difficulty in his/her ZPD as necessary as possible and withdraws the support when it becomes of no use or when the learner has mastered it (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). This is where learning instructions from the teacher can succeed because real learning is possible. This is called the 'magic middle'- somewhere between what the learner already knows and what he/she is ready to learn given the support ( Berger, 2006).

Learners with this kind of problem need much assistance in the classroom in order to read like others. This assistance and guidance should come from teachers, parents and other adults as central to the child's learning and development (Karpov and Haywood, 1998). The assisted learning needs scaffolding, for instance, giving prompts, reminders, encouragements and information at the right time in the right amount and allowing the learners to do more work on their own gradually. This is in line with the teaching of learners with reading and writing problems where teachers adapt materials to suit the needs of the learners in the classroom as stated in the theory.

Considering the above, children with reading and writing difficulty can learn through imitation, adapted materials, collaborative learning and by using a variety of teaching aids.

They learn through multi-sensory approach (Ott, 1997) which according to Vygotsky (1978) is the teaching method that aligns with the ZPD that incorporates several approaches to form a comprehensive agenda for development, function and structure of the human psyche. He further asserts that, within the classroom, learning can as well be more knowledgeable and be placed in collaborative groups with those who have mastered tasks and concepts to aid them.

### **3. Methodology**

**This section is on methodology that was used in the study it focused on; the research approach and design, sampling and sampling procedure, instruments of data collection, procedure of data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability, ethical consideration and limitation of the study. The study sought to find out how learners with reading and writing problems were taught in an ordinary classroom.**

#### **3.1 Research approach and design**

The study employed the qualitative method to get the answers to the research question. The intention was to study the phenomenon in a natural setting to get rich data. This was to get as much information from the teachers as possible. Patton (2002) asserts that qualitative approach provides a chance to get close enough to the people and the circumstances so as to capture what's happening. Due to its main features, qualitative research was opted for, as it “usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the data collection and in the analysis of data (Bryman, 2004: 266). It also enables an in-depth understanding of human behavior. (Loflan, 1984). At the same time qualitative approach puts emphasis on ways individuals interpret their social world while focusing on understanding of how social order is created through talk and interaction. It is concerned with subjectivity and the inside experience.

Qualitative approach assisted in finding out how the two teachers reflected on the ways they taught reading and writing and the experiences in the process. It was strongly felt that methods of teaching reading and writing could adequately be expressed in words rather than in any form of quantification. The two teachers expressed their perceptions in teaching reading and writing in an ordinary school by means of words hence a qualitative approach was used. The school being a unique ordinary primary school, qualitative approach enabled the unearthing of teaching methods that were perceived to be important in teaching reading and writing as perceived and experienced by the teachers. That means the perception of methods used in teaching of reading and writing which were interpreted from the perspective of the informants. The informants gave their own reflections which is one of the strengths of the qualitative approach. Therefore the informants presented their “emic views” of learners with reading and writing problems while empathizing within the process.

A case study design was used which is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (Yin, 2003: 13) while it “entails the detailed analysis of a single case” (Bryman, 2004). The case study design enabled the study of the phenomenon, teaching of learners with reading and writing problems to in-depth and in its real contextual situation ordinary primary school. Additionally, it was ideal to focus on a single case given the short time frame to carry the study.

## **3.2. Sampling and informants**

### **Area of study**

The study was done in one primary school in Oslo, Norway. The school was an ordinary primary school.

### **The informants**

These consisted of two teachers who were teaching reading and writing in the school. They had a lot of experience in teaching of reading and writing skills.

### **Sampling procedure**

One ordinary primary school was purposively sampled. Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007, states that the purpose of selecting a case is to get in-depth information of the phenomenon under study. The sample consisted of two female teachers teaching reading and writing.

### **Criteria for selecting the school**

This was also purposefully done with the assistance of one of the professors from the Department of Special Needs Education. This was the case due to the fact that the researcher was not quite familiar with the regions and the schools. The school was chosen for it had teachers who had taught reading and writing for a long time and the accessibility at the same time to cut on the costs that could have been incurred if the investigator was to choose another school out of Oslo.

### **Criteria for selection of teachers**

This was done purposefully for this study. It was done with the assistance of the school Principal. The two teachers were selected because they were the ones who were assigned teaching of reading and writing from 1<sup>st</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the school. Also it was felt they were

suitable for the study due to the long experience they had in teaching reading and writing. Both teachers had taught the skills for a period running to about thirty years. The goal of purposeful sampling is to get cases that are likely to be ‘‘information rich’’ with respect to this study.

### **3.3. Research instruments- interview**

An interview is a conversation that involves face to face interaction between researcher and respondent. The interviewer makes arrangement with the concerned people before conducting the interview to tell them of the procedure and materials that will be used. Through the process, respondents’ unique thoughts and experiences later become data which the researcher interprets and synthesizes in order to make the respondents knowledge heard and understood (Hartas, 2010).

Following the above, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. Hartas (2010) affirms that the method allows the investigator to control the interview process by probing deeper into the initial responses of the respondents to gain a more detailed answer to the question. In this case, how rich the data was depended on the interviewer. I also concur with Hammersley (2003) when he argues that during the interview, where the respondent is not clear, further explanations can be provided by the interviewer.

Using this method, there is a possibility of the researcher going deeper into issues being discussed by probing questions. I tend to agree with Creswell (2008) when he points out that where the interviewee is not clear, further explanation can be provided by the interviewer and that some non-verbal actions by the respondents can add meaning to the issues being discussed, for instance, shaking head in agreement/disagreement.

However, Conolly (2007) argues that respondents may hide some sensitive and important information for fear of being identified and punished. Another limitation is that interviewees may be inclined to tell the researcher what they feel he/she needs to hear so as to please him/her. With this method, one cannot cover many interviewees because it is very tedious and time consuming.

## **Semi structured interview**

This is one of the interviewing techniques used in qualitative data collection. The interviewer uses open-ended or closed-ended questions or both but most interviewers prefer the first one. There is a structure and order of the questions asked though the researcher may probe additional questions for clarification depending on what the respondent has said. Here, most of the questions asked are the same to all interviewees. This makes the technique to be flexible. Nonetheless, the aim of the study may impose the technique of interviewing to be undertaken by the researcher (Friesen, 2010). The questions to be explored in the process of interview should be framed and thought of in advance with what the investigator wishes to ask in different ways (Lindolf and Taylor, 2002).

If the questions are to be standardized then they must be formulated in words familiar to the interviewees. The main aim is to make the respondent feel free and open but the investigator gets rich information. Since this approach may not have closed questions, it may be difficult to end the session. When the researcher feels that all topics and questions have been exhausted and the time is over, he/she can ask the respondent if he has additional information. After the interview the investigator should make a summary of what was discussed as this might help during transcription (Friesen, 2010).

Transcription from the tape recordings or notes written during the interview process should be made and revised. Due to the hard task of transcribing, the researcher should just note down the main points or ideas from the tape. He/she should then classify the information according to the topics as was said by the informant and avoid being bias (Laforest, 2009). This technique is good when the researcher seems to have only one chance to conduct the interview with an informant.

There may be advantages of using semi-structured interviews, for example, it may be easy for an individual interviewee to disclose sensitive issues; it encourages free communication between the interviewer and the interviewee; questions are formulated in advance and this enables the researcher to prepare and be competent during the interview process.; it provides an opportunity for learning as the two exchange ideas through asking and answering questions and the answers being justified with reasons; it also enables the interviewees to express their views freely using their own terminologies (Cohen, 2006; Friesen, 2010 and Berg, 2009).

However, there are disadvantages of this technique as well. For instance, it is time consuming and requires resources such as tape recorders and video cameras; it needs the researcher to have skills for data analysis to avoid expounding too much. It also requires one to have interviewing skills in order to succeed; during session, the researcher may be tempted to ask leading questions and this may tamper with the reliability and validity of the study and some investigators may fail to ensure confidentiality (Cohen, 2006).

### **3.4. Procedure for using interview in the data collection**

#### **3.4.1. The process with pilot interview**

Piloting is a small scale testing of procedures that one intending to carry out a study plans to use in the main study. It also helps the interviewer to assess the sufficiency of the instruments and research design to be used for the collection of data. A significant objective of pilot is to plan a set of codes for every question that will be asked and the possible answers in reply to the main research problem. In order for this to be effective, the pilot informant/sample should represent the group who will be involved in the main study (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996).

A range of areas should be explored in the pilot interview which may be, for example, if the informants understand the questions as formulated, this needs the researcher to employ appropriate language according to who the informants are; if they require prompting in some questions; if the session is too long for the informants such that they become impatient; if the order of questions is not sequential. The study helps the researcher to test the instruments generally and see areas that need adjustment (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996).

It was done with one former primary school teacher with experience of teaching children with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom who was doing her masters' degree in special needs education, University of Oslo. Contact with the teacher was made with the help of a professor in the Department of Special Needs Education. The informant gave some important information so I will pick and use the relevant ones she gave in my data presentation and discussion. This is because it is difficult to get in contact with informants in the place where the study was carried out. From the study I realized the questions were slightly difficult to comprehend to the teacher since she was not confident in English. I was

also tempted to ask leading questions and this is a weakness in the interview process. This was avoided when conducting the real interview. Before the actual data collection the questions in the interview guide were simplified and reduced.

### **3.4.1. The interview process**

Interviews were conducted at the school premises in an exclusive room. Each interview session lasted for a period of 30-45 minutes. The interviews were conducted on the same day according to the time agreed by the interviewees. An interview guide was adopted for this particular study based on Patton, (1990) description of approaches for collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. The approach involved outlining a set of topics to be answered by all the interviewees.

The interview questions asked a series of questions and probing deeply through the use of open-ended questions to get more information. All interviewees were asked the same questions but different probing questions as per the interviewees' responses. By doing this, same or similar data was collected from the interviewees in detail, contrary to what could have been got from a structured interview.

Clarifications were sought by the interviewer on different responses given that were not clear and this helped to minimize bias and misunderstanding of the interviewees. The data was recorded on an audio tape recorder and thereafter transcription made for analysis. At the end of the study, the tapes were deleted afterwards.

## **3.5. Ethical considerations**

As Punch (2000) asserts, ‘‘all social research involves consent, access and associated ethical issues, since it is based on data from people about people (teachers about learners with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom). Interviews of participants met the general protocol and procedures for interview. The investigator sought permission from the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services (NSD) in Norway to use the informants and get their permission to give her the information that she needed. The proposed study ensured that informed consent was obtained from participants too. They were given full information about the research including the reason why they had been chosen to participate. The participants' privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Consent forms and a covering letter were provided.



Similarly, the school being used for the case study needed to give permission to interview the teachers who teach learners with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom. The school was assured that the findings would be used appropriately as well as the reporting and dissemination.

### **3.5.1. Informed Consent**

For the interviewer to get this, she made a formal request to the teachers to be interviewed with the help of a Professor in the Department of Special Needs Education to take part in the study (Gall Borg et al, 2003). A verbal request was made to the informants before and during the visiting time.

#### **During the interviews**

Before carrying out the interviews, the researcher made a request to the informants to allow her to tape record their answers/responses. This helped during transcription as the investigator could listen to confirm what they had said several times before writing the responses down. Since this was a way of cross-checking the given information from the informants, it gave her a reflection of the study after leaving the place. The interviewer also let the informants know that she had been granted permission with the head of the school to interview them since they had experience for many years of teaching children with reading and writing problem in that particular school. This helped to build rapport and confidence among us. Their names were coded to hide their identity hence confidentiality.

#### **Use of Pseudo-Names**

The investigator decided to use pseudo-names in this study since it is ethical so as to create a good relationship and to hide the informants' identity. In this paper, the readers will notice that the name of the school where the study was carried out and of the informants have been kept anonymous. This was done by not naming the primary school. Some readers may not see this as a better option but for the purpose of the study, the researcher deemed it fit. It is now the responsibility of the readers to apply the findings to their respective countries where the phenomenon is applicable.

## **3.6. Validity and Reliability**

In order for the study findings to be consistent and accurate, the major considerations to be made are Validity and Reliability. When designing a study, the researcher should take care by ensuring that the data collection is both valid and reliable (Kvale, 2009 & Friesen, 2010).

### **3.6.1. Validity**

This refers to the extent in which the method used measures what it is meant to investigate. This means that the research should yield accurate results by measuring what it is intended to measure and not something else. For example, in this study, the investigator wanted to know the methods that teachers employ to teach pupils with reading and writing problem, so all questions in the interview guide were geared towards answering the research question (Kvale, 2009 & Friesen, 2010).

### **3.6.2. Reliability**

In the study, the validity and reliability of the interview guide has to be focused (Kvale, 2009 & Friesen, 2010). The two authors further clarify that reliability is the extent to which a given test would produce the same results when done by other researchers more than once on the same group of people or individuals. For instance, every time one child is asked the same question, he/she gives different answers. This is an indication that the question is unreliable. A reliable question should give the same answer all the time it is asked so long as there is no alteration done on it. This applies to the interview process. Using the same interview guide, will other interviewees give similar response to the questions? If not then the instrument is unreliable (Kvale, 2009 & Friesen, 2010).

#### **Efforts made to secure Validity and Reliability of the study**

The researcher made the following efforts in order to secure the validity and reliability of the study:

First and foremost, all the instruments should be in the focal point and how they were used. Attempts were made to produce appropriate instrument which was relevant to the study. For instance, the study was to find out the teaching methods that teachers use to teach learners with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom. To consign the relevancy of the

instrument, the questions asked in the interview guide were based on the statements for investigating the methods for teaching this group of learners (Kvale, 2009 & Friesen, 2010).

Attempts were also made to test the reliability of the interview guide before carrying out the main study. It was through a pilot study. It was conducted with an informant who had been teaching learners with reading and writing problem before going back to college to pursue a course in special needs education. In the main study, experienced teachers who have taught children with this problem for many years were interviewed.

Internal validity was secured by the investigator. Researchers like (Kvale, 2009 & Friesen, 2010) argue that internal validity refers to initiating an incidental relationship where some conditions lead to others. Before the main study, the researcher should try to determine and establish events that may lead to others. In this study, internal validity was secured through the sampling procedure where the teachers who had not taught learners with reading and writing problem were excluded before sampling the participants.

External validity was also considered as an important factor. According to Kvale, (2009), this kind of validity deals with setting up the domain/concern to which the findings can be generalized beyond the current study.

### **3.6.3. Factors that might have threatened validity and reliability**

There are some drawbacks that could have affected the validity and reliability of the study even though attempts were made to help lessen them. Bordens and Abbott, (2005) argue that unclear or vague questions and poor conceptualization may affect the validity of the study. For example, some concepts were clarified at the beginning of the interview but the investigator could not be sure whether the meanings were understood by the participants. This could have affected the way they answered some questions.

Besides, if there were sampling mistakes made by the researcher during the sampling process, it may have interfered with the final sampling that represented teachers in the school of study. Some of the threats were fore seen by the investigator and intervention measures taken to reduce their effects on the main study.

### **3.6.4. Limitations of the study**

Despite the research being complete, there were some challenges encountered, for example:

The major limitation was the fact that the investigator was taken ill for several months that led to her operation. Because she spent many weeks at the hospital, this affected her time of conducting the study effectively.

It was difficult to get informants because the interview was to be conducted in English and most teachers felt that they lacked competence and were not fluent in English since the language of instruction in schools is Norwegian.

The exclusive reliance on only one instrument for collecting data could not allow the researcher to explore the problem in depth. For example, the investigator needed to carry out a classroom observation to evaluate the methods used for teaching learners with reading and writing problem in the classroom for all in order to supplement findings from the interview. This was not possible since the language of instruction in school was Norwegian which the researcher was not conversant with. So there was no way she could observe the lessons without understanding what was being said.

Parents of children with reading and writing problem would have been interviewed to ascertain the teachers' statement of involving parents in the learning of their children at home. Even though the researcher wanted to know how children with reading and writing problem are taught in an ordinary classroom, the respondents had nothing to say on how they train these learners to write. All their responses were on the strategies for teaching reading. So no information was collected regarding the development of writing skills enhanced by teachers. This could have been a weakness on how the questions in the interview guide were formulated or lack of prompting from the researcher.

## **4. Presentation and discussion of the findings**

The aim of the study was to find out how children with reading and writing difficulties are taught in an ordinary class. It was conducted in one primary school in Oslo in Norway. The cases were two teachers teaching reading and writing in an ordinary school. The data was collected using interview method. Pseudonyms have been used to keep the confidentiality of the informants.

The main research question was: How are pupils with reading and writing problem taught in an ordinary classroom? This question was focused on since reading and writing are quite significant in learning and they are interrelated. Many teachers have always ignored learners with this kind of problem in their classes due to lack of knowledge on how to teach them.

The presentation and discussion is guided by the themes emerging from the research questions and the data. The themes include, meeting the different needs of all pupils in the classroom, sense of belongingness in the class, support pupils with reading and writing problems need from teachers, collaboration among pupils with and without reading and writing problems in classroom activities, individualized activities, methods of teaching pupils with reading and writing activities, materials/resources used in teaching pupils with reading and writing problems, support needed by teachers to teaching pupils with reading and writing problems. The findings are presented concurrently based on the interviews. . Studying multiples cases makes it possible to build a logical chain of evidence (Yin, 1994, Miles and Huberman, 1994).

### **4.1. Meeting different needs of all pupils in the classroom**

In any classroom all pupils have various needs which have to be tackled differently. The teachers explained in each class from grade 1-7 there are usually three teachers per class to oversee the needs of each pupil. As the teacher teaches, the assistants help those with reading and writing problems. They had this to further explain; *as I teach I also go to them to help*

*and usually take them out for reading lessons afterwards (Informant 1 and 2); I give them individual attention by withdrawing each one of them out of the class for special lessons three times a week. I also give them homework after signing a contract with their parents.*

Information 2 stated that the parents are made aware of what they are supposed to do so as to help their children do the homework given. Informant1 explained that in most cases she tries to be warm towards all pupils to make them feel welcome and for each child to *feel himself. I try to create a classroom with good mood for all children*” informant 2. Complimented informant1, that, *“I always try to find out how each one of them is every time am teaching”* The teachers did not give further explanation as to how they could create a good classroom. However they appeared to take keen interest in the wellbeing of the learners they taught.

### **Discussion on meeting individual needs of all pupils in the classroom**

The informants also talked of giving individual attention by withdrawing these pupils out of the class to give them special lessons. Kirk et al, (2008); Guppy and hughes, (1998) & Graham and Kelly, (1997) assert that this special attention should be given within the classroom in order to enhance inclusion and it also helps the teacher to ensure that all pupils are working and that the pupil with the problem is not treated as special . However, this special attention is to the benefit of the pupil since he/she will have a one-to-one attention by the teacher and this has a unique value since it provides rich insights into the process of reading.

It also creates a good rapport between the teacher and the pupil and helps the pupil to feel that his/her reading and writing problem is taken seriously. They further suggest that these pupils’ time for learning may have to be adjusted and the instruction modified to accommodate them in the ordinary classroom. They continue to argue that special attention should be given to these pupils to ensure that they have basic reading and writing skills and that this can be done using assistive and instructional technology like programs in the computer that aid pupils in reading and writing hence can meet their special needs.

In order for teachers to meet the individual needs of pupils with reading and writing problem in an ordinary classroom, informants 1 and 2 said that they have teacher assistants in the classroom who help pupils with reading and writing problem when the lesson is in progress.

This is good and it is to the benefit of those with problem so they do not feel excluded when the rest of their peers are working. In other words, it is not enough just to decide to place these pupils in an ordinary classroom environment. If inclusion is to succeed, there should be different support personnel to help the classroom teacher to provide a good environment for all pupils in the classroom. This is team work that has been quite helpful in schools (Smith, 1994; Kirk et al, 2008 & O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

According to informant 2, they involve parents by explaining to them what to look out for when their children are reading at home. This is school-home collaboration which Kirk et al, (2008) affirm to be good as it promotes continuity between the work done in school and the homework at home. For special education to be effective the parent should to be involved and an early intervention is likely to increase this importance of the family. This is because a lot of intervention with young children is geared toward changing the family environment and preparing parents on how to take care and teach their child. This in turn tries to create a good parent-child interaction (Cox & Paley, 1997) since parents can teach their children some skills that may later be reinforced in the school/class and this means inclusion of parents in the learning of their children.

Research by Bailey et al, (1994) shows that children and families are highly interlaced and their intervention and this intervention with children somehow influences families and likewise intervention and support by families has an influence on children. The family-focused approach helps parents to be more independent in giving support to their children rather than depending on professionals for everything about their children. However, this approach may only be applicable to literate parents.

## **4.2 Sense of belongingness in the classroom**

The teachers reported that all learners are involved in activities that make them feel to be full members of the class for example, informant1. *"We have a special program for social activities that helps pupils to belong in the classroom. There are eight topics that we focus on every year and each pupil has a chance to talk about what he/she feels or thinks the topic is all about to the whole class. This gives an opportunity for those with reading and writing problem to express their opinions in the classroom."* Informant 2 also commented that she tries to make a classroom that makes children feel that everything is alright by creating a good

mood and trying to make all children feel equal by giving them equal opportunities, *though it is hard as a teacher to make all children feel equal in the classroom*. This shows that both teachers involved all learners in the social activities irrespective of their abilities. This makes all learners to feel as one complete family and build social relationships among them and emotional well-being whereby they learn to get concerned with one another as they share knowledge.

### **Discussion sense of belonging in the classroom**

In order to help pupils feel that they belong in the classroom, informant 2 said that they have a special program in their school which involves eight topics to be focused on every year and each pupil has the opportunity to talk about what he/she thinks the topic is about to his peers in the classroom. This enables those with reading and writing problem to express their opinions/ideas in the classroom in a social manner. It aids the pupil's imagination about something he/she has not seen and also builds their confidence as they do the presentation in class. They also learn to summarize main ideas from the imagination which will have been taught by the teacher prior to the lesson (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011). This is a good approach of giving pupils equal chance in the class.

According to Piaget and Vygotsky's theories, pupils differ in their cognitive development and academic knowledge and by using this approach, a teacher can determine which pupils have thinking abilities and which ones do not and this can carefully be done by observing and listening to them as they do their presentation. If they are asked how they figured out their answers then attention is paid to their answers then their thinking abilities and strategies can be determined which may help to explain their problems (Case, 1985 & Confrey, 1990).

Vygotsky also acknowledges the fact that a lot of children's thinking is assisted by teachers especially through language. Whereas informant 1 talked of a special program for social activities, informant 2 said she gives homework according to the level of pupils and another one that makes all pupils to be part of the class. This is in line with Vygotsky's theory which suggests that teachers can aid pupils' learning by adapting materials or work to the pupil's level as it holds the child's interest in the activity.



Many instructional strategies summarize the skills and ideas of the text/topic to help these pupils with reading and writing problem. This may be done by the classroom teacher by initiating instruction based on the goals and pupils' prior knowledge on the topic. For instance, pupils may have difficulty in selecting main ideas from a topic/passage and this calls for the teacher to sequence the lessons based on individual pupil's needs by breaking the task according to pupils level to help the pupil have a sense of belonging in the class, not to be in isolation as the peers work on the given task (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011).

Guppy & Hughes, (1998) argue that breaking the topic according to pupils level is not enough, teachers are supposed to walk the pupil through the broken tasks by reading with and for the pupil before letting him/her read on his own as this helps in capturing the pupil's attention as his/her peers read independently. It also holds the pupil's interest in the text. Anita et al, (2008) assert that teachers should start this instruction strategy by giving simple assignments to these pupils before moving to more complex or one homework done by the whole class as this will assist the teacher to note the pupil's progress on reading and writing.

They further suggest that teachers should create an accepting classroom environment that accommodates all pupils by giving opportunities through cooperative learning, peer tutoring, play times and after-school team sports which makes the pupils feel that they are equal and belong to the same group hence this will raise their self-esteem.

### **4.3 Support needed by teachers to teach pupils with reading and writing problems**

This was rather a slightly difficult question for the teachers, but both of them concurred that it was important to undergo training so as to acquire the basic skills in teaching reading and writing. Both of them did not have any training in teaching reading and writing but had gained experience through the long period of teaching the skills. Informant 1, commented, *that'' in my case, I didn't learn much about it so sometimes I feel incompetent. I didn't have any background on Special Needs Education''*.

The teachers further stated that if parents too assisted their children with reading and writing problems at home, then there would be a continued solution of the problem. The whole task

would not just be left to the teachers alone. In the case of this school, there was good collaboration of both parents and teachers. Informant 2 emphasized that, *“I give them homework after signing a contract with their parents. I explain to the parents what they have to do/look at when their children are reading at home because some of these pupils read the first letter of the word or cut the ends of the words.”*

Informant 1, further added that she had got some support from her principal and the other teachers who also deal with reading and writing. She emphasized; *“we need to have discussions with other teachers on how to help these pupils in the classrooms”*.

Informant 2, felt that there was need for more teachers, as that was the best way to do things, as in the school they were only three teachers at three levels who give support to other teachers. *“We need more assistant teachers who can sit with some slow learners and help them to organize their work by showing them what they are going to do and we have gone far by using this method”*.

Both teachers were experienced in teaching reading and writing but they felt incompetent since they had not gone through any formal training. Parental support is also seen to be very important since they also spend part of the day and evening with their children so should take a keen interest in what their children do at school. The parents in Norway cannot avoid this as they have to sign a contract with the teacher who is working with their child. Collaboration of teachers is important in supporting one another.

#### **4.4. Support teachers give pupils with reading and writing problem to improve their academic achievement**

As mentioned in (4.1.1), each classroom has more than one teacher; as such this enables each and every learner to be given the necessary attention while in the classroom. Informant 2 explained that, *“we have teacher assistants in our classrooms to help the pupils with reading and writing problem as the teacher teaches the whole class*. Informant 1 had this to further explain; *“as I teach I also go to them to help and usually take them out for reading lessons afterwards”* The teachers also reported that once they have identified those learners with

reading and writing difficulties, they give them individual attention by withdrawing each of them out of the class for special reading or writing lessons for 30 minutes three times a week. Informant 1 stated that if it is a reading lesson then she tries to explain what the text means in simple terms so they have a pre-understanding of what the text means. I try to give them something simple they are going to read. *“Usually the text I give them is related to what the rest of the class had read so rarely do I introduce something new”* informant 2, reported that she also signs a contract with the parents so that she can work with a learners from 1<sup>st</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> grade with reading and writing problems in their homes for half an hour every day for a period of eight weeks, *“I work with them in a special program so I do a follow up”* There is an indication that learners with reading and writing problems are given an individualized attention out of the classroom. This in a way may contradict the basic understanding of inclusion as these learners are separated from the rest of the class as learning goes on. They miss out on what the other learners are involved in.

### **Discussion support teachers give pupils with reading and writing problem to improve their academic achievement**

The reading should be supported with diagrams, colored pictures and computer programs which support reading by giving immediate feedback with corrections. Shared reading may also be of some help where the teacher pairs pupils to read together hence the one with reading problem is assisted by the able pupil, however, this may have some negative impact as the able pupil may feel he/she is misused by the teacher to offer help to his/her peer. The able one may also know the other one's incapability to read and make fun of or laugh at him/her which may in turn discourage the pupil. On the other hand, this may be an advantage to the one who cannot read properly as he/she is guided by his age-mate (Smith, 1994 & Guppy and Hughes, 1998).

Smith, (1994) suggests the use of poetry to support reading in the classroom. This is usually accompanied by rhymes with good rhythms which draws pupils' interest and engage them in reading the poem. This conveys a deeper meaning and understanding of the text within a short time and pupils always enjoy reciting short poems. From the study, this method was employed by the teachers in that school. This was practiced in the school of study as reported by both informants.

Another finding from the study was that both informants make use of child-centered approach which according to Isaacs, (2012), supports reading in the whole class and the teacher is able to reach all pupils and the approach also makes the child's development in reading natural. Montessory, (2007a) in Isaacs, (2012) argues that learning and development are highly intertwined and given a good environment, pupils are able to teach themselves by choosing activities that interest them and going through them.

Informants talked of involving the parents to extend the support at home. This as discussed earlier is paramount because it enhances the school-home collaboration which Kirk et al, (2008) affirms to be helpful as it also promotes continuity of the school work to home. I concur with them because the parental involvement is vital since a lot of intervention with the pupils is geared towards changing the family environment and preparing them on how to care for their children which also promotes a good parent-child interaction. It also creates a good working relationship between home and school.

The above involvement makes the pupil to realize that home and school share similar values and aims and this offers a sense of security to him/her. The parents on the other hand feel valued by the school. However, this team work presents with it the challenge of distance-since the two parties stay away from one another. Many parents may not have enough time to attend to their children at home and as such may employ a helper to tuition the child at home. The helper may use his/her own methods to teach the child and this breaks the continuity of school-home tuition which may confuse the child. The school can rescue the situation before it gets out of hand by giving written guidelines on how to teach reading and writing to the pupil, calling parents meeting to discuss the progress of their children and by offering school reading records to them (Guppy and Hughes, 1998). This was an oversight in this particular school.

## **4.5 Cooperation of learners in classroom activities**

The teachers gave different views on how learners with and without reading and writing problems could be made to work together in the classroom activities. Informant 1 stated that most of the time she teaches the whole class but in the process the assistant teacher would go

round the class to assist those experiencing difficulty in reading or writing , at the same time encourage those who know how to read to assist those with problems, she stated; “ *that is what we do to mix them*” informant 2 responded that “*here in Norway we don’t separate them as I saw in in the British schools, we take them to be very much alike and they work with the same topic. However as a teacher you walk to them and tell them this is what you are going to work on and this is what I expect of you, so the pupil and I know about each other but the others do not know.* She further explained that learners with reading and writing problems work individually but at some other times together with the rest of the class. This arrangement also differs in the grade levels; informant 1 reported that in 1st and 2nd grades, there are no special tasks because they just want them to learn simple tasks as they work together as a class. But that’s different in the 3rd grade where they are divided into groups and have group leaders who take turns every week. The learners are given printed texts which they exchange from station to station and the process is a success as pupils learn to work with one another. She emphasized; “*we put them to work together because I believe it is a win-win situation as they get help from other children and it is also good for other children to help others with problems though it is not smart in a long time perspective.* It is evident that the teachers encourage the learners to work together in various activities. Even though in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade they form groups and the role of leadership enables the learner to participate in the classroom activities and feel part of the class as they assist one another. The teachers also give them activities that enable them to work and share together the difficulties they may experience.

### **Discussion on cooperation of pupils in classroom activities**

In order to engage all pupils in the classroom activities, informant 1 divides pupils into groups headed by rotational leaders. This is significant as it ensures that leadership role is achieved by all pupils. This is cooperative learning which encourages turn-taking and patience among pupils because they may be physically present in class but not included unless they are able to participate in group and class activities. It also keeps many pupils involved in the activity and reduces the teacher’s attention to one or two pupils all the time though this does not hinder the support given to those with reading and writing problem when need arises (Kirk et al, 2006 in Anita et al, 2008).

Even though this makes all pupils to be engaged in the activity, in case of mixed ability grouping, pupils with problem may end up feeling frustrated since most of them have social relation problems. When new and difficult concepts are involved in the activity, then cooperative learning may not be the best alternative as it will make the pupils suffer rejection. It might not be generally effective for this group. Likewise, the gifted pupils may also not gain from cooperative learning or group work because the tasks may be too simple for them and members with reading problem may be too slow and this makes the gifted pupil to assume the role of a teacher and may do the whole activity by him/herself for the group unless the teacher combines simple and complex tasks to help engage the gifted pupil (Kirk et al, 2006 in Anita et al, 2008).

Informant 2 said that she explains the topic and at times allows pupils to choose how to handle the topics either by drawing, writing or making a play out of it. When the teacher explains the activity by giving cues and clear steps coupled with relevant materials, this enhances good engagement in the activity. All these may help in arousing their curiosity and this is a motivation for them to read and get answers especially if the activity is associated with real life. Nonetheless, it is not easy for teachers to give individual attention to all pupils in the classroom so the activity should be engaging (Emmer and Gerwels, 2006 in Anita et al, 2008).

Anita et al, (2008) further suggest that for a teacher to engage all pupils in the classroom activities, he/she should ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to set and work towards practical objectives by starting with short tasks then complex ones and monitoring and keeping pupils' progress, giving pupils an opportunity to show their ability and responsibility by delegating tasks to them like collecting and distributing resources and offering support to the discouraged pupils by using a variety of attractive materials, giving awards according to progress, for instance, most helpful/hardworking/improved pupils.

In order to help a pupil with reading and writing problem to work with the same activity, some of the arguments discussed above may apply. Pressley, (2002) also states that the teacher should use motivation in the classroom by varying his/her teaching styles simultaneously to capture the pupils' interest in the activity. This may be achieved by being gentle and caring together with good teacher-pupil interaction and school-home relationship.

He further suggests that the teacher should offer relevant materials to the pupils which are somehow challenging but not so much to enable them use their cognitive abilities.

He/she may also need to give concrete examples when explaining certain concepts in class and offering individual support to those with reading and writing problem. Curriculum should also be modified to accommodate these pupils' needs in class by breaking the tasks according to their level but maintaining the meaning and objectives of the lesson. When giving individual attention to these pupils in class, the teacher should avoid frequenting the pupils' desks as this may make their peers suspect they have problems and this may cause rejection and lower their self-esteem (Pressley, 2002).

According to both informants, they need more support staff like teacher assistants to help them take care of pupils' individual needs in the classroom. I concur with them but feel that this is not enough since children can learn from many sources like computers, games and other relevant and concrete teaching materials and human resources such as parents and peers, so teaching materials are very important in class (Sparks and Hiley, 1989). They also need team planning, facilitation by experts on special needs education and regular collaboration with other teachers, parents and peers. They need professional development in order to offer good support to those with reading and writing problem (Strickland et al, 2002).

## **4.6. Methods used in teaching learners with reading and writing problems**

Informant 1 reported that most of the time she started the lesson by talking about the goals of the lesson in reference to what they had learnt previously and this was meant to help the pupils recall what was taught in the previous lesson; *“for example, something in the computer and is divided and the score is got- this is another method”* informant 2, also had more less the same approach, she had this to say; *“what I have done which I think is good is that I talk to them about the activities they are going to do but I have to be proactive because sometimes these pupils stop doing things at some point. I go to these pupils with problems first when they are working but not to be there throughout but check out on them because some of them will*

*stop working on the activity. I also build a good relation with them.*” The teachers also explained that at times they divide the learners into groups irrespective of their abilities and give them some text to be read in a rotational form, in the process those with reading problems are assisted by their peers in the group. Informant 2 stated that; “*. I also use look and say method where a child looks at the picture and says what he/she thinks it is.*” In teaching reading both teachers try to create rapport with the learners to get their attention on what they are to teach. They give the learners text to read which are from simple to complex depending on their background knowledge. They are also prompted to read or write the words or letters they see.

### **Discussion on methods used in teaching pupils with reading and writing problem in class**

It is essential to adopt a holistic aspect when teaching in the classroom, not only looking at the pupils’ strengths and weaknesses, but also their preferred learning styles. For example, which approaches may be preferred by the pupil? In what way will these approaches cultivate the pupil’s interest, motivation and self-esteem? Under what conditions is the pupil likely to learn best? These questions should be deliberated upon before choosing an appropriate intervention and teaching methods. Although pupils with reading and writing problem may have some common difficulties, these may not be the same. Therefore, the teaching methods and intervention strategies should address the needs of individual pupil in the classroom (Reid, 1994).

Informants 1 and 2 said that they start their lessons by discussing the goals/objectives of the lesson. These are the teacher’s expectations on pupils at the end of the lesson. This prepares pupils from the start to focus on the purpose of the lesson, however, very general objectives may not be meaningful as clue for teaching hence the teacher may need curriculum subject guidelines to give universal learning statements according to age groups. The objectives should focus on the main changes that will influence the pupils’ knowledge and skills. The teacher should then ask pupils to interpret the intention of the objectives (Anita et al, 2008).

Informant 1 talked of walking around and giving pupils something when they are working. I think this is a good idea as it helps pupils to be engaged and those with problem get sorted out



as well. She is able to tell which pupils need help depending on the task (Anita et al, 2008). The use of computer is also mentioned by the same informant and this as mentioned earlier, helps pupils to be active and self-oriented. On the other hand, if the use of the technology is not controlled properly by the teacher, it may distract other pupils' attention from what the teacher is saying.

From the above arguments, teachers should have a theoretical knowledge about teaching methods for reading and writing. They should simultaneously combine all these methods because by using only one method, reading and writing problem is likely to emerge (Pumfrey and Reason, 1991 & Reid, 1994). They further suggest that a multi-sensory method is the most effective for teaching all children in the classroom, especially those with learning difficulty. Using this method may not only relieve anxiety, but also activate their brains to take in the information conveyed by the teacher since it uses all senses to communicate information to pupils.

Informants 1 and 2 say that they withdraw these pupils out of class for a certain period to give individual attention then allow them back to attend other lessons. I think this kind of attention should be given within the class to avoid exclusion even though it is to the benefit of the pupil as this attention is given in a quiet and secluded room where other pupils do not know what is going on and there is no interference.

According to (Isaacs, 2012; Salamanca Statement, 1994 & The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000), pupils with reading and writing problem need constant support in class to help them improve academically. To be able to offer this support, it is important for the teacher to have a positive attitude towards these pupils and change his/her role when in class. His role should be to offer support and give direction that makes the pupil feel included in class hence self-oriented.

During the reading lesson, the teacher should give these pupils cue talks where he switches roles between active and passive by partly demonstrating and prompting discussions between him and the pupil and listening and getting information from the pupils. He should also give positive reinforcement when the pupil has read a word correctly. Give words that do not

distort the meaning of the text and giving time when the pupil pauses (Guppy and Hughes, 1998).

## **4.7. Materials used in teaching learners with reading and writing problems**

There are various materials that can be used to teach reading and writing. Informant 1 reported that she used specific materials such as cards, pictures, (these can be shown to the learner so as to read and write the word or letter shown), movies and music in a smaller classroom to get the rhythm which is important for spelling at the start of reading. She also uses colors for painting. Informant 2 stated that she used the computer to train the learners how to read, separate letters and spell words. The teachers used the basic materials in teaching learner with reading and writing problems. Use of computer is also emphasized which as discussed above seems to be an effective teaching technique to help teachers give support to children with reading and writing problem in the classroom.

### **Discussion on materials used in teaching pupils with reading and writing problem**

The manner in which teachers act in the classroom, depends entirely on the teaching materials available in the lesson. The different types of materials available may be concluded from the specific areas of teaching/study (Brown and Saks, 1980; Gerber and Semmel, 1985). From this study, it is evident that pupils can learn using many sources such as computers, cards, games, books, pictures, discussion groups and people like parents, teachers and peers.

Meeting pupils' individual needs is about finding out by asking questions and through observation- the way which works best for each pupil that is flexible and allows teachers' choice in matching materials to pupils according to individual needs (Lewis, 1995 & Strickland et al, 2002). What came out during the interview is that both informants talked of employing the above materials in their classrooms to teach pupils with reading and writing problem.

However, some materials may only be available in town schools due to availability of electricity, for example, computers, significantly, computers enable pupils to learn at their own pace and gives immediate feedback and reinforcement. The pupil's learning becomes more active and self-oriented. Most teachers look at it as appropriate assistive technology as well as a tool for intervention (Lahm & Nichels, 1999 in Kirk et al, 2006).

As these pupils in town schools are taught how to read and write using computers, their counterparts in the rural schools lack the facility. Nonetheless, they can rely on other available materials like visual aids such as pictures, diagrams, games and cards to improve their learning and get the same concept (Ellis and Whitehill, 1996; Reid and Beveridge, 1986 in Anita et al, 2008).

Another finding was that teachers have respect for these pupils by giving attention when organizing learning environment, availability and completeness of homework and relevant teaching materials that help in meeting individual needs of the pupils in the classroom (Montessori, 2007c in Isaacs, 2012). Materials to encourage reading may not necessarily be printed texts but rather something real like a harmless insect or toy car that captures the pupil's interest and some of these can be placed in a corner of the classroom.

Experienced and well prepared teachers know how to model writing and help pupils with this problem to write on their own. Play materials should also be provided in play grounds to motivate pupils to practice writing during their free time (Strickland et al, 2002). They suggest that teachers should know and plan strategies to work with different families since family members can also motivate their children to read and write at home and this may increase the pupil's academic achievement.

## **5. Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter gives a summary and conclusion of the findings of the study.

### **5.1. How teachers meet the needs of pupils with reading and writing problems in the classroom for all.**

From the findings of the study, it is possible to deduce that teachers in the school of study do employ different techniques in order to meet individual needs of all learners in the classroom. They talked of withdrawing pupils from the classroom for special lessons. However, researchers such as (Guppy and Hughes, 1998; Graham and Kelly, 1997 & Kirk et al, 2008) argue that this special attention should be given within the classroom because however much the child will gain from outside, it promotes exclusion. They maintain that these children should be added extra time to accomplish the given task. They further suggest that teachers can use assistive and instructional technology like computers to help pupils with reading and writing problem within the classroom.

Another outstanding finding was that teachers collaborate with each other to reach these pupils in the classroom. For instance, teacher assistants help the learners as the class/subject teacher attends to the rest of the pupils. This in a way enhances inclusion as those with problems are given attention in order to get involved in the activities like the rest. The extra personnel help in creating conducive learning environment for all children (Kirk et al, 2008 & O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

There is also the collaboration among peers where learners with reading and writing problem are assisted by their able peers. It helps the teacher to create a classroom for all and also enables children to be free with one another and ask for assistance when needed. This free interaction encourages the learning process and makes learners feel that they belong to one class (Strickland et al, 2002; Webb and Palinscar, 1996 in Anita et al, 2008 & Isaacs, 2012) they learn to empathize and sympathize and get concerned with one another as they share knowledge. However, the use of peer support this support may waste children's time as they

may socialize instead of learning unless it is done under close supervision by the teacher (Anita et al, 2008).

In order to create a sense of belonging to the classroom, teachers in this school involve learners in social activities whereby they are given equal opportunities to participate. This helps in building social relationships among them and emotional well-being. It also encourages collaboration in the class and freedom of expression. Both informants talked of breaking the task to the level of learners with reading and writing problem. This enables the pupils to work on the same activity like their peers which according to Vygotsky's theory is to their benefit as they will not feel left out (O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011).

## **5.2. Support that teachers give learners with reading and writing problem to improve their academic achievements**

From the findings, teachers use variety and relevant teaching materials in order to meet the diverse needs of children with reading and writing problem. For example, the use of computer programs which help pupils with corrections on spelling and reading instantly. The teachers in this school also used pictures, diagrams, attractive colors and books to teach reading and writing to those with problem (Isaacs, 2012).

Both informants employed child-centered approach to reach all pupils in the classroom. This helps with natural development of reading in children since learning and development are interlaced.

Another kind of support that was found in the study was the parental involvement in the learning of their children with reading and writing problem. This is done by signing contract with teachers. It promotes school-home relationship and the continuity of school work to home under supervision. It also creates a good rapport between the parent and the child (Kirk et al, 2008). This involvement offers security to the child as he/she realize that the school and home share the same aims and values. The parents also feel that they are valued by the school and this enables them to comprehend the educational needs and strengths of their children.

The results reveal that many intervention programs for pupils with disabilities are formulated and monitored closely by a multidisciplinary team. Parents are part of the team because they can give information regarding their children to the professionals and this is deemed important if the program is to develop.

The teachers employed various teaching methods in order to offer their support to the learners with reading and writing problem in the classroom. For example, the two informants talked of moving around when pupils are doing an activity to offer the support that these pupils need. The teacher is in a position to identify pupils who require assistance depending on the task (Guppy and Hughes, 1998).

The informants also use the withdrawal method whereby they remove pupils with reading and writing problem and take them to a resource room for remedial work. Though this is beneficial to the learner, it contradicts the notion of inclusion as stated by many international and national policies (Salamanca Statement, 1994; Jomtien Declaration on Education for All, 1990 & The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000).

The child-centered approach was effectively used and it helped learners to have the opportunity to express their ideas freely and feel equal. This was done through peer support or cooperative learning, group discussions and class presentations. The latter aided pupils' cognitive development by being able to express their opinions and thoughts in a more constructive way depending on their thinking abilities (Anita et al, 2008).

The learners are also given freedom of choice on how to tackle a given task, for instance, by drawing, acting a play, writing and any other way the pupil chooses. This helps in the development and encouragement of talents to solve different problems even outside the classroom (Anita et al, 2008).

The informants mentioned the application of 'look and say' method. This is an effective way of teaching vocabulary as the pupil is given a picture and asked to say what he/she thinks the picture is. It aids the child's memory later on as he/she tries to recall the picture and the word (Strickland et al, 2002; Feifer and De Fina et al, 2000 in Pressley, 2002).

Learning was also carried outside the classroom to break the classroom monotony. Children who have problems in reading and writing get the opportunity to show their peers what they can do and lead them in those activities by demonstrating or facilitating to them (Pressley, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, inclusive education is not just about providing access into the mainstream school for all pupils, but also making changes in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching approaches, styles and leadership roles. This is because it embraces the participation of all children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice (Barton, 1998; Booth, 1996 Ainscow, 1995). As participation of those who are 'different' takes root, all learners and teachers gain the virtues of being accommodating, accepting, patient and cooperation. Teachers in the study area seem to show concern for the well-being of all learners in their classrooms. They give them equal opportunities by involving them in social activities which enhances family unity as they share and exchange knowledge. School-home collaboration is also emphasized and this creates a good working relationship (Kirk et al, 2008). This collaboration enhances the parental satisfaction of the feeling that their children are being educated together with their counterparts from the same neighbourhood.

It is also evident that individual attention to learners with reading and writing problem is practiced using withdrawal method. Thus, the learner benefits from the remedial though it is a threat to inclusion. The results indicate that children can learn from many sources ranging from computers, books, games as well as people. Meeting individual and special needs involves knowing the preferred learning style of each child in the classroom (Strickland et al, 2002; Anita et al, 2008 & Isaacs, 2012). It seems reasonable to assume that learning will be more effective when the teaching and learning environment are compatible with the pupil's preferred learning style. This is because people learn better when they are able to exploit their strengths. While this may be a common sense assumption, it is one of paramount importance to pupils who may not be able to adapt to a teaching style and learning environment that lay emphasis on their weaknesses. Learning styles can be a competent way in which teachers may employ to support learners with reading and writing problem to access the curriculum.

According to the informants, they apply multi-sensory teaching methods to meet the individual needs of all learners in the classroom. They exploit the methods simultaneously. However, inclusion in this school is partially practiced because from the above discussion, the teachers still remove pupils with reading and writing problem from the classroom to give them extra attention in a secluded room. Inclusion as mentioned by Reid, (1994) and Mittler, (2001) should be seen as more all-embracing than integration and should penetrate in relation to meeting all categories of disabilities not only those with special educational needs. Thus all children benefit from learning and working together in an inclusive educational system. Other children without disabilities gain some valuable virtues such as being considerate, patient and humble as they support their peers with special educational needs. Some learners with special educational needs are gifted with special abilities which their counterparts can benefit from (Massey, 2008 & Reid, 1994).

Although it appears that there are enormous advantages of inclusion, it is clear that there are many challenges facing it. Research shows that it is not merely about providing access into the mainstream school for all. It is not about closing down the special schools and dumping those pupils in an unchanged mainstream system, but changing the existing schools as mentioned above. This is an indication that inclusion cannot be done on the cheap. Its initiatives require a proper activity led funding formula (Glocelli, 1995, 1999; Ainscow et al, 1995 & DfEE, 1997). Inclusive education, therefore, is a process of people enquiring into their own context to decide on the way forward for its development hence it is a process of growth that has to pass through stages. It is a social process which engages people to try and make sense of their gained experience and aid one another to evaluate their experience and context in order to proceed ahead. It is clear throughout the study that the efficiency of the management in the school is crucial for the whole school administration and that in a learning organization everyone has a role and responsibility to play. The head-teacher should ensure a well-structured collaborative work is carried out by all staff for mutual benefits, so all pupils regardless of their differences should be able to access all opportunities. The role of the school is thus to value and treat its learners equally and offer quality education in order to achieve success.



### **5.3. Limitation of the study**

Due to the fact that the researcher was ill, this affected her studies during the period of conducting the study. Much of her time was spent in the hospital and this seems to be a major shortcoming in the study.

Language of instruction in schools in Norway is Norwegian. This made it difficult to find informants who were ready to be interviewed in English.

It would have been fair to involve parents in the interview since it seems they have been incorporated in the learning of their children by collaborating with teachers. This is one way the researcher would have affirmed this involvement.

A classroom observation would have helped the investigator to supplement the findings from the interview by seeing and evaluating the methods used to teach learners with reading and writing problem.

Another shortcoming that was realized during the study was that the informants avoided to give information on how they teach writing, all their answers were on the teaching of reading in an ordinary classroom. This could also be attributed to the formulation of questions in the interview guide.

### **5.4. Recommendations**

From the research results and conclusion of the study, some recommendations are suggested for schools and teachers as regards inclusion of all learners in ordinary classrooms.

Classroom teachers should have some knowledge on phonological awareness as pupils begin to learn how to read. This will assist them to apply intervention measures at an early stage which might rescue the whole situation. The early the problem is detected before frustration sets in the better.

Teachers should utilize multi-sensory teaching methods which incorporate all the approaches and should employ them during the lesson in order to reach all learners' diverse needs within the classroom to promote inclusion.

Children with reading and writing problem may not adapt to a teaching style and learning environment which focuses on their weaknesses. This calls for class teachers to use the pupils' preferred learning styles since people learn better when they use their strengths.

Teachers need to have a theoretical knowledge of all the major reading methods. He/she should utilize a combination of these methods simultaneously since reading and writing problems are likely to arise when teachers rely on only one teaching strategy or technique.

It is very important for class teachers to be able to identify learners who are struggling with reading and writing. It is worth remembering that not all learners with reading and writing problem display the same characteristics. Each pupil is different although they may have some common difficulties which need to be acknowledged in the teaching process. Individual differences may be identified through learning styles and strategies.

Schools should buy a 'Toe by Toe' reading guide book. The book is based on multi-sensory teaching method and is highly recommended for teachers and parents. It has very clear and precise instructions that can be followed by classroom assistants, parents and teachers who are new in the profession. The book has a phonic element which demands the learner to memorize by planning and timing each lesson in the book. Many children with reading and writing problem who have used the book have improved in learning to read and this has raised their self-esteem.

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# Appendices

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



NSD - Prosjekt nr 2012-01  
14.06.2012  
Søndre  
Til: 14.06.2012  
Fra: 14.06.2012  
NSD - Prosjekt nr 2012-01  
14.06.2012  
Søndre

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Vtress: 30.06.2012

Vtress: 30.06.2012

Dens dato:

Dens dato:

# TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 26.07.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

<i>Prosjekt</i>	<i>Tracking Children with Dyslexia in an Individual Classroom</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Universitetet i Oslo, via Institutt for spesialpedagogikk</i>
<i>Dyktig av søk</i>	<i>Jorunn Bull-Holmberg</i>
<i>Sistnavn</i>	<i>Josephine Ogano</i>

Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysningene som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Vurderingsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, [http://www.nsd.uio.no/personvern/forsk\\_snu/skjema.html](http://www.nsd.uio.no/personvern/forsk_snu/skjema.html).

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen

*Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim*  
Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

*Sondre S. Arnesen*  
Sondre S. Arnesen

Kontaktperson: Sondre S. Arnesen tlf: 55 58 25 83

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

✓ Kopi: Josephine Ogano, Olav M. Trøviks vei 66, 110234, 08e4 OSLO



## CONSENT LETTER

Having read the information sheet and heard the project explained to me, I have agreed to participate in the said project. I understand that:

- There will be confidentiality in the information I will give.
- My information will not be disclosed to any party in the course of the study.
- It is voluntary to take part in this study.
- I can choose to take part in some/all the project.
- I can withdraw at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

Signature.....

Date .....

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Teaching Pupils with reading and writing problems in a classroom for all**

Information: My name is Josephine. I am Erasmus Mundus programme student doing Masters' degree and I want to carry out my research on 'how to teach children with dyslexia in an inclusive classroom. I am a teacher by profession in Kenya. I would like to get some information from you on the topic if you agree.

1. What do you do to create a good classroom for all pupils?
2. How do you meet the different needs to all pupils in the classroom?
- 3 . What do you do to help all pupils belong in the class?
4. What kind of support from teachers do pupils with reading and writing problems need?
5. What do you do to encourage all pupils to work together in class and for those with reading and writing problems?
6. What do you do to help all pupils engage in the classroom activities?
7. What do you do to help a pupil with reading and writing problems to work with the same activities as the others in the class?
8. What kind of methods do you use in teaching pupils with reading and writing problems to improve their academic achievement?
9. What kind of materials do you use when teaching these pupils in the classroom?
10. What kind of support do teachers need to help these pupils in the classroom?

